

REGULAR meeting of the Board of Equal Rights Commission held  
Wednesday, January 16, 2013 in room 301-B of City Hall, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

PRESENT: Jeffrey Roman, Chair  
Mayhoua Moua  
Chez Ordonez

EXCUSED: Linda Reaves, Vice-Chair

Staff: Maria Monteagudo, Employee Relations Director

Excused: Rebecca Reyes Duke, HR Compliance Officer  
MaryNell Regan, Assistant City Attorney

Chairperson Roman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**Agenda Item #1**

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the November 14, 2012, Equal Rights Commission meeting were approved.  
(Moua/Ordonez)

**Agenda Item #2**

**Follow Up Briefing from Steve Mahan, Director,  
and Matthew Balistreri, Grants and Compliance Officer,  
City of Milwaukee Community Block Grants Administration (CBGA)**

Mr. Mahan had met with the ERC at their October 3, 2012 meeting to discuss the requirements that are attached to the City of Milwaukee receiving funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and for the Department of Labor (DOL). He stated at that time, that there must be an EEO component involved with the entity receiving the monies. Mr. Mahan stated that the ERC is that component for the City of Milwaukee and as such, there are HUD related statutory goals that can be addressed through collaboration with the CBGD, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) and the ERC. He stated that he and his staff would work on a formal proposal to present to the ERC at a future meeting. Mr. Mahan and his staff subsequently have put together a proposal and he and Matthew Balistreri, Grants and Compliance Officer, appeared before the ERC to present the proposal.

Mr. Mahan presented the proposal as follows:

# Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission

## Community Outreach Proposal

The City of Milwaukee, as a Participating Jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is required by law to be in compliance with the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 Section 104(b)(2) and 106(d)(5). This Act requires that grantees certify that they will affirmatively further fair housing.

The Department of Administration's Community Development Grants Administration (CDGA), serves as the conduit for applying for, recommending the allocation of, and overseeing the effective use of Local, State and Federal funds for programs in targeted central city neighborhoods.

CDGA has contracted with multiple community entities to address Neighborhood Strategic Planning, Fair Housing/ Fair Lending complaints and Legal Representation for residents for Fiscal Year 2013. CDGA proposes to the Equal Rights Commission (ERC), a Community Outreach mechanism to assist the ERC in educating the community on human/civil rights and civil liberties and on resources and options available to assist with discrimination complaints. In addition, CDGA proposes establishing Community Collaborations and Partnerships that promote and support Prevention, Education and Training in the areas of Housing and Lending Discrimination.

Currently 18 neighborhood planning areas are funded by CDGA throughout the City of Milwaukee in contiguous areas (see NRSA Map). The areas funded are represented by community based organizations (CBOs). The CBOs are responsible for: conducting door-to-door contacts, coordinating community planning meetings to address neighborhood issues and resident concerns, establishing & maintaining block clubs/ neighborhood watches/ landlord compacts and neighborhood cleanups.

**Neighborhood Strategic Planning Areas**

NSP Area	Area Name	Coordinating Agency	Address
1	PARKLAWN	YMCA-Parklawn	4340 N. 46 <sup>th</sup> St. (16)
2	NORTHWEST SIDE	Havenwoods EDC	5460 N. 64 <sup>th</sup> St. (18)
3	LINCOLN PARK	Lincoln Park Community Association	1301 W. Hampton Ave. (09)
4	UNITED COMMUNITY	Northwest Side CDC	4265 N. 30 <sup>th</sup> St. (16)
5	SHERMAN PARK	Sherman Park Community Association	3546 W. Fond du Lac Ave. (16)
6	HARAMBEE	Westcare Foundation	335 W. Wright St. (12)
7	RIVERWEST	YMCA-Riverwest CDC	829 E. Clarke St. (05)
8	METCALFE PARK	Safe and Sound	801 W. Michigan St. (33)
9	AMANI	Project Respect	2730 N. 27 <sup>th</sup> St. (10)
10	WAICO	YMCA-Northside	1350 W. North Ave. (05)
11	GRANDVIEW/WALNUT HEIGHTS	Lisbon Avenue Neighborhood Development	3701 W. Lisbon Ave. (08)
12	MIDTOWN	Safe and Sound	801 W. Michigan St. (33)
13	HILLSIDE/LAPHAM	Boys & Girls Clubs	611 W. Cherry St. (12)
14	WEST SIDE	Merrill Park Neighborhood Association	3326 W. Michigan St. (08)
15	GREATER CLARKE SQUARE	Southside Organizing Committee	1300 S. Layton Blvd. (15)
16	NEAR SOUTH SIDE	Hope House of Milwaukee	209 W. Orchard St. (04)
17	HISTORIC SOUTH SIDE	Southside Organizing Committee	1300 S. Layton Blvd. (15)
18	HISTORIC GRANVILLE	YMCA-John Cudahy	9050 N. Swan Blvd. (24)

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Specifically, in conjunction with the mission of the *Community & Neighborhood Engagement Sub-Committee* of the Equal Rights Commission, CDGA proposes that ERC staff and the MMFHC train community organizers in each of the 18 planning areas on the equal rights objectives of Chapter 109 and Section 104(b)(2) and Section 106(d)(5) of the Housing & Community Development Act of 1974.

At the conclusion of training, each NSP community organizer will engage in the following: **conducting community surveys, referrals of discrimination complaints, distribution of resource materials and coordination of fair housing presentations with assistance from MMFHC.**

#### **Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC)**

**The Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) is currently funded by CDGA to provide the following:** 1) Affirmatively work toward integrated housing patterns by providing: fair housing/ fair lending presentations, research and technical assistance relative to fair housing/ fair lending issues; 2) Information relative to buying, renting and selling homes; 3) Counseling and investigation services to receive and resolve fair housing/fair lending complaints; 4) Distribution of a fair housing newsletter on a quarterly basis and; 5) A coordinated community-wide response to the problem of predatory lending. This is accomplished through the following:

- ❖ **MMFHC's Counseling and Investigative Services** will investigate fair housing complaints to uncover insidious forms of systemic discrimination in the housing industry. MMFHC will conduct tests in the rental, sales, insurance and lending industries throughout its service area.
- ❖ **MMFHC's Education and Outreach Program** will inform home-seekers and housing providers about fair housing rights and responsibilities to ensure compliance with fair housing laws. Fair housing and fair lending presentations will be conducted to civic, business, educational, neighborhood, religious and housing industry groups.
- ❖ **MMFHC's Fair Housing Training Services** will assist housing professionals in the real estate, insurance and mortgage lending industries and provide contractual fair housing training. MMFHC will conduct specialized seminars on fair housing issues for a variety of groups. These seminars provide in-depth information on fair housing and fair lending laws, procedures and other related issues.
- ❖ **MMFHC's Community Economic Development (CED) Program** will address fair lending issues in a variety of ways. CED staff will respond to calls from a predatory lending hotline and investigate fair lending allegations. After investigating the loan and discussing options with the client, where appropriate, cases will be referred to Legal Aid, other attorneys and/or lenders and housing counseling agencies. Also, when appropriate, CED will assist clients to restructure existing loans or to find other, more appropriately priced loans, sometimes helping clients apply for refinancing through the rescue fund operated by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC). CED will also assist consumers file complaints with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions.

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- ❖ CED will also generate television, radio and print coverage on predatory lending as part of its' outreach and education. CED staff will disseminate informational brochures on predatory lending in English and Spanish and give educational presentations to church groups, neighborhood associations, civic organizations, social service groups, elected officials and affordable housing professionals. CED staff will help plan and implement workshops designed for people considering refinancing or home equity loans, including workshops at the Money Conference and other neighborhood or community-based events.

#### **The Legal Aid Society**

The **Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, Inc.**, will continue to operate its' A-LINE Project and represent vulnerable inner city residents who have been victims of predatory lending practices. Legal Aid Society will continue to provide direct representation to victims of predatory mortgage lending practices and mortgage foreclosure rescue scams. Through Legal Aid's representation of inner city residents who are facing foreclosure and have been victims of predatory lending practices, the goal is to increase the economic viability for clients and, in turn, the City neighborhoods where clients reside. As the record high rates of foreclosure continue, Legal Aid will continue to work to combat predatory lending practices and assist homeowners in foreclosure actions. Legal Aid will continue to challenge foreclosure actions on the grounds that the underlying loan was unconscionable, in violation of federal or state regulations or other grounds. Legal Aid will continue efforts to challenge the unconscionable practices of auto title lenders and pay day lenders. In particular, Legal Aid challenged the practice of Wisconsin Auto Title Loans, Inc. of placing auto club dues into the loan principal.

In addition to the formal proposal, Mr. Mahan referred to several attachments including a neighborhood map identifying the 18 strategic planning areas and the forms that would be utilized to track activity and outcome based metrics.

Commissioner Ordonez asked what cost is associated with implementing this proposal.

Mr. Mahan answered that there is no cost associated because within the identified 18 strategic planning area neighborhoods, there is one full-time CDBG funded employee assigned to each neighborhood. These employees are the “community organizers” referred to in the proposal that will be the conduit to conduct community surveys, refer complaints of discrimination, and distribute resource materials, etc. after receiving training from the ERC on the objectives of Chapter 109 and training from the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC).

Ms. Monteagudo asked if providing training sessions to the community is a requirement tied to agencies receiving HUD funding.

Mr. Mahan stated that if the ERC agrees to the proposal, that agencies receiving the HUD funding will be required to hold, for example, 18 training sessions per year; one per the strategic planning area. This is currently not required, but is one way to educate the community on their rights and provide them with a mechanism to complain about unfair treatment. He said that currently there is no conduit for the organizers to address human rights issues that they become aware of. For example, people coming out of prison that are in need of housing have issues with finding a rental with their criminal past. Single mothers have issues with landlords that don't want to rent to them for different reasons. These groups of individuals may not know what their rights are and landlords can take advantage of that with renting substandard housing or denying housing.

Ms. Monteagudo referred to the work that the ERC did with Clarence Johnson from Wisconsin Community Services (WCS) in hiring 15 of their re-entry clients into temporary appointments with the City of Milwaukee. She said that there may be an opportunity to collaborate with WCS in providing training to their re-entry population on their rights when it comes to finding housing.

Mr. Mahan agreed stating that utilizing the ERC as a conduit will assist in reaching those groups of individuals that may be deemed as “non-rentable”. He said that the organizers that are currently out there do receive training from the Non-Profit Center in several different areas. The current proposal will add additional training provided by the ERC as well as the MMFHC. He added that in addition to asking the ERC to provide training to the community organizers, he is also asking that the ERC utilize their website as a resource for complaints and develop some type of advertising that will assist in educating the public on their rights as it relates to Chapter 109.

Ms. Monteagudo asked Mr. Balistreiri is he meets regularly with the community organizers.

He stated that he has quarterly meetings or more if needed.

She then asked if there was an upcoming meeting scheduled or if a meeting could be scheduled with the community organizers and the ERC. She then asked the Commissioners if they had availability on February 20<sup>th</sup> to have an introductory meeting with Mr. Mahan, Mr. Balistreiri and the 18 organizers.

All agreed that this was a good idea and with some coordination, will agree to meet on Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at Hillside.

Commissioner Roman asked for clarification on what exactly the responsibility of the ERC will be in relation to the proposal.

Mr. Mahan replied that this proposal will utilize the ERC as a conduit to refer complaints that are in violation of Chapter 109.

Some additional discussion was held regarding the overall responsibility of the ERC, as well as, what authority the ERC has in relation to Chapter 109.

Ms. Monteagudo added that it may be helpful to have the City Attorney provide an overview to the Commissioners on what Chapter 109 means in relation to the authority that the ERC has.

Some additional discussion was held regarding what role the agencies named in the proposal hold and what responsibility those agencies have in reporting their metrics and outcomes to the ERC.

Ms. Monteagudo summarized that the intent of the proposal was to:

- Develop and implement a referral and reporting system with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) for housing discrimination complaints;
- Identify and establish education and outreach opportunities with the community organizers that the CBGA work with;
- Utilize the ERC website to include an online complaint and referral system.

Commissioner Roman then asked for any additional questions. Hearing none, the ERC thanked Mr. Mahan and Mr. Balistreri for their proposal before moving on to the next agenda item.

### **Agenda Item #3**

#### **Committee Reports**

##### **Accountability Committee**

Ms. Monteagudo provided the Commissioners with a draft strategic planning document for 2013 ERC activities. She asked the Commissioners to review the document and revise as needed to identify what goals they would like to focus on for the year. She added that she would like to have their feedback by February 1, 2013.

##### **Community and Neighborhood Engagement Committee**

Ms. Monteagudo stated that the ERC website is being updated and asked that the Commissioners review the links that were sent out and provide any feedback they have to Ms. Reyes Duke.

Commissioner Ordonez provided an update on Latino candidates running for Milwaukee Public School Board Spring elections. He added that he has also signed on as a

consultant for the Council for the Spanish Speaking regarding school options for the Latino community.

**Agenda Item #4**

**Next Meeting Date**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Equal Rights Commission will be held on Thursday, February 14, 2013, at 3:00 p.m. in Room 301-A of City Hall. There being no further business, Chairperson Roman adjourned the meeting at 4:48 p.m.  
(Moua/Ordonez)